

Washington, DC – Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) Chair Mike Honda (D-CA) and other CAPAC members today joined community health advocates around the country in recognizing the First Annual National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Part of the Banyan Tree Project, this national campaign is designed to “foster acceptance and reduce stigma towards Asian and Pacific Islanders at risk for or infected with HIV/AIDS.”

Asian Pacific Islander Americans (APIAs) are among the fastest growing racial/ethnic populations in the United States. Despite stereotypes depicting APIAs as “model citizens” who enjoy perfect health, health advocates point out that HIV/AIDS awareness is lacking in many communities. Indeed, APIAs in the U.S. have higher rates of those preventable diseases that are also co-factors for HIV/AIDS – including hepatitis B and tuberculosis – than white Americans.

According to such groups as the San Francisco-based Asian and Pacific Island Wellness Center, the Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum, and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HIV data collected between 2000-2003 reveals a 54% increase in AIDS diagnosis among APIAs. As of December 2003, men accounted for 87% of APIA AIDS cases, with 71% occurring among men who have same-sex relations. Among APIA women, 49% of AIDS cases were attributed to heterosexual contact.

“National API HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is the first step in breaking the silence and reducing the shame associated with HIV/AIDS, and we applaud the Banyan Tree Project for their efforts,” CAPAC Chair Honda said. “Reducing stigma will give APIAs greater access to services we need and deserve, which in turn will reduce the spread of HIV.”

“By observing the first annual National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, we bring much needed attention to the devastating impact this disease has on our community. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among APIAs is not fully understood because of the lack of detailed HIV surveillance, underreporting, and misclassification of cases,” CAPAC Health Task Force Chair Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU) said. “We must take this opportunity to educate and motivate our communities to advocate for resources to support initiatives that address these issues.”

For more information on National API HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, please check out the following links:

Online API HIV Resource List:

http://www.omhrc.gov/hivaidsobservances/api/api_resources.html

National API HIV Awareness Day:

<http://www.omhrc.gov/hivaidsobservances/api/index.html>